

# NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH NEWSLETTER

*Good neighbors are the primary reason that neighborhood watch programs work!*

**VOLUME 15 ISSUE 5**

**SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2007**

## Back To School

Today many children care for themselves before or after school. Kindergarteners through eighth graders spend time after school in self-care at least once a week. Amid an increasing number of parents working, there are more children who are at home alone after school, and many who care for younger siblings.

Prior to making the decision of allowing children to remain home alone after school keep in mind that some children enjoy caring for themselves and happily accept the added responsibilities. While others may be lonely, bored or scared. For all of them, the self-care experience is an opportunity for parents to discuss all aspects of safety and crime prevention, as well as build their children's self-esteem, confidence, and competence.

Short test runs might help you assess whether your child is ready to stay home alone. Try going out for a few minutes. When you return, discuss the experience with your child. Increase the amount of time you are away, and leave specific instructions to follow. Role play different scenarios to prepare them for anything that might happen when they are home alone. After a few trials you will know if this is the best solution or if alternate arrangements need to be made.

This provides an excellent opportunity to promote self-care skills. Set guidelines and increase levels of responsibility after a while. Address basic safety principles. If children understand why they must be home alone and what they can and

cannot do their risk of danger as well as the concern of parents can be greatly reduced. There are numerous things children should know before being left alone. It is essential that parents instruct children:

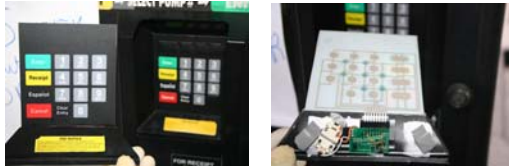
- To memorize their name and address, including city and state.
- To memorize their phone number, including area code.
- To never go into your home if a door is ajar or a window is broken.
- Discuss what to do if their key is lost.
- To always check in with you or a neighbor immediately after arriving home.
- How to answer the doorbell and telephone when they are home alone.
- Not to go into anyone else's home without your permission.
- Never go anywhere with another adult unless you have made arrangements ahead of time. Adopt a family code word to use if you have to ask a third party to pick up your children.
- To avoid walking or playing alone.
- Don't take unfamiliar short-cuts to or from school.
- To run to the nearest public place, neighbor, or safe house if they feel they are being followed.
- To always tell you if something happened while they were away from you and that made them feel uncomfortable in anyway.
- Have a backup person to call in case of emergency.
- Do not use any appliance without a parent's permission.

**ANDREW HALL, CHIEF OF POLICE  
CITY OF WESTMINSTER  
SERVICE WITH INTEGRITY**



## Identity Theft

Electronic technology has become an everyday fact of life. In the right hands, technology has the power to transform our lives in ways that only a generation ago we could never have imagined. However, in the wrong hands, technology can lead to identity theft, online auction fraud, and many other crimes.



These skimming devices were found by an employee of an Arco Gas station in Huntington Beach. As you can see, they look just like the real thing.

These devices are connected to the machine by the suspect and may only stay resident for a few hours. They capture card numbers and PIN information (or zip codes) as the machine is used. The devices are later retrieved by suspects, who then use the captured information to perpetrate identity theft.

**A good rule of thumb is to ONLY use your ATM card to withdraw money from an ATM machine at a trusted bank.** Suspects are less likely to attach skimming devices to ATM machines located at banks. If you were to use your ATM card at a location where a suspect had installed a skimming device, it would only be a matter of time before your bank account was depleted.

If you do not have cash on you and want to use a card, a credit card is recommended. If you were to be a victim, it is always better to have your credit card compromised than your ATM card.

**Since these devices are not easy to detect, it is recommended that you look the device over and lightly pull on it to see if it is authentic or not. An authentic device will not fall off when pulled.**

Your safety is a priority on all levels ranging from physical to financial!

Westminster Police Department  
8200 Westminster Blvd.  
Westminster, CA 92683  
Emergencies Call 911  
Business Hours: Sunday- Saturday 7:00a.m. – 7:00p.m.  
Website: [www.westminster-ca.gov/depts/police](http://www.westminster-ca.gov/depts/police)

## HALLOWEEN

Children love the fantasy and thrill of dressing up in costume. They look forward to both tricks and treats, yet Halloween can be a time of concern for parents. Concerns stemming from candy being given to their children by strangers, to the multitudes of masked and costumed trick-or-treaters at the door. The following few safety tips can ensure safe fun for children and candy-givers.

- Clear your yard and sidewalk of any obstacles or decorations that may be hard to see in the dark, lest someone go bump in the night.
- Pets sometimes get frightened on Halloween. Situate them in a safe place to protect them from cars or to prevent an accidental bite to a trick-or-treater.
- Have good lighting, both inside and out; you wouldn't want to miss any particularly good costumes, would you?
- Report any suspicious or criminal activity to the police department.
- Stay in familiar neighborhoods.



Police Line: 714-898-3315  
Traffic Division Ext. 339  
Records Bureau Ext. 371  
Neighborhood Watch Ext. 590  
Code Enforcement 714-893-3311  
Graffiti Removal 714-895-2876



To make sure even the scariest costumes are safe, keep the following in mind when buying or designing one. Try makeup instead of masks; it's more comfortable and will not obstruct vision the way masks can.

- Check that costumes are flame-retardant so that children are not in danger of near burning jack-o-lanterns and other fire hazards.
- Keep costumes short to ensure that the only trip taken is the one around the neighborhood.
- Look for brightly colored costumes, attach reflector strips to costumes and bags, and remind trick-or-treaters to carry glow sticks and flashlights.
- If a costume involves any sort of fake weapon, make sure that it is made of a flexible material such as cardboard or foam. Or, avoid the whole problem of weapons by challenging your child to design a costume that is scary without one.
- Older kids should trick-or-treat in groups; kids walking around alone are never as safe as those in groups, and especially not at night. Younger kids should be accompanied by a parent or trusted neighbor.

After a successful and safe night around the neighborhood, remember that the treats still need scrutiny before anyone eats them. Remind your children not to eat treats until they come home.

- Remind children not to eat their treats until they get home.
- Check all treats at home in a well-lighted place. Be especially wary of anything that is not wrapped by the factory or that is no longer sealed.
- Only unopened candies and other treats that are in original wrappers. Don't forget to inspect fruit and homemade goodies for anything suspicious.

## HAVE A SAFE AND HAPPY HALLOWEEN!



The Neighborhood Watch program is designed to keep people involved in their neighborhoods, consequently becoming the “eyes and ears” of the community. The hope is that by being involved and aware of your neighborhood, you will know when something is wrong. If you are interested in becoming involved in the Neighborhood Watch program, please contact (714) 898-3315 Ext 590.

## Personal Safety

Do You:

- Jog or walk by yourself early in the morning or late at night when the streets are quiet and deserted?
- Stuff your purse with cash, keys, credit cards, and checkbook—and then leave it wide open on a counter, desk or the floor? Put your wallet in a jacket, which you then hang up or throw over a chair?
- Think it's a waste of time to lock your car when you'll be back in a few minutes.

If you answered “yes” to any question, you should consider changing a few habits. Even if you answered “no” and made a perfect score, please read on.

Stay attentive and tuned in with your surroundings wherever you are—on the street, in an office building or shopping mall. Send the message that you are composed, confident, and know where you are going. **Trust your instincts.** If something or someone makes you uneasy, avoid the person or leave.

When carrying a purse, hold it close to your body, not dangling by the straps. Place wallets in an inside coat or front pants pocket, not a back pocket.

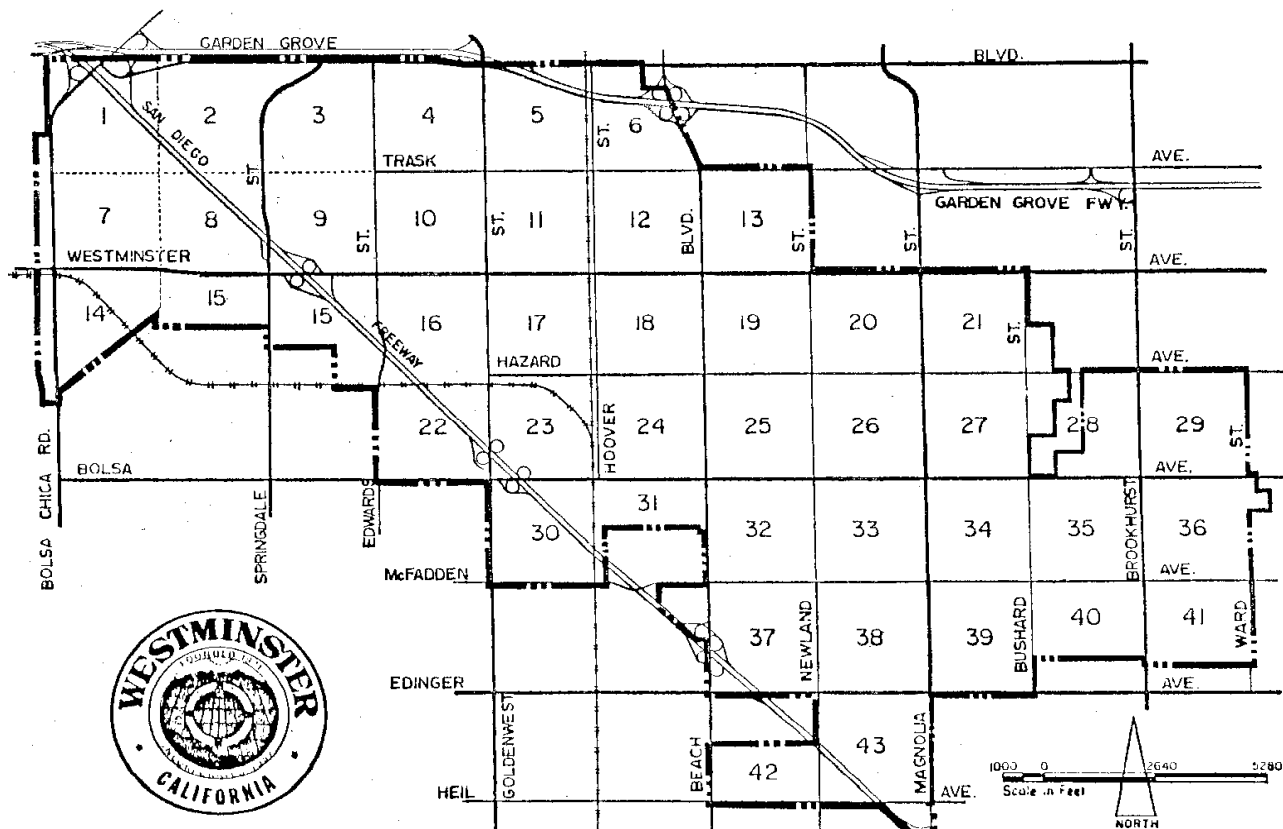
Try to use the ATM in the daytime. Have your card in hand and don't approach the machine if you are uneasy about people nearby.

When you are walking, stick to well traveled streets with good lighting. Avoid shortcuts through parking lots or alleys. If you think someone is following you, switch direction or cross the street. Walk toward an open store, restaurant or lighted house. If you are scared yell help.

Have to work late? Make sure there are others in the building, and ask someone—a colleague or security guard—to walk you to your car or transit stop. Avoid parking in isolated areas. Be especially alert in lots and underground parking garages. Always roll up the windows and lock car doors, even if you are coming right back. Check inside and out before getting in.

**TAKE A STAND AGAINST CRIME!**





## RESIDENTIAL BURGLARIES

A R E A	JULY	AUG	YTD	A R E A	JULY	AUG	YTD	A R E A	JULY	AUG	YTD
1	0	0	4	16	0	0	2	31	0	0	0
2	1	3	8	17	0	1	1	32	0	0	1
3	0	0	1	18	0	0	4	33	2	2	10
4	0	0	7	19	0	0	3	34	0	0	4
5	0	0	5	20	1	0	10	35	1	4	10
6	0	1	3	21	0	0	6	36	1	2	8
7	2	1	4	22	0	0	1	37	0	0	3
8	1	1	5	23	0	1	1	38	2	1	8
9	0	1	5	24	0	0	0	39	2	0	5
10	0	1	4	25	0	0	0	40	1	1	6
11	1	0	5	26	0	0	5	41	0	1	3
12	1	2	12	27	1	0	7	42	0	0	2
13	1	1	8	28	1	0	3	43	0	1	3
14	0	0	1	29	0	1	8				
15	0	1	4	30	0	0	4				

	JULY	AUG	YTD
<b>TOTAL BURGLARIES</b>	19	26	192

This newsletter is published bimonthly by the Administrative Services Bureau

